

## An Exception In Gurie

by C V Ford

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Summary: It is said Haibane are here only for a short time & then they're gone. No one knows how they leave though they do. Rumor has it some don't & if so, they live out their days isolated & forgotten in dreary, secluded existence. As far from people as the wall will allow. Forgotten ... never to be remembered. But is it always thus & so? A prequel to a story to be posted next week.

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An Exception In Guri

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><p>Even when he was in the town of GuriGlief proper, the Washi/Communicator passed by only on occasion. He never stopped by but the baker always made it a point to show himself when the holy man walked past. The baker cared little if the shaman ever entered his place of business even though he preferred the masked one didn't. It's not that the baker was afraid. He not only didn't have any reverence, he absolutely loathed him.

As the robed figure strode on, people would stop what they were doing. Some would stare in awe, others avert their eyes. Some ... even bow.

Not so the baker. He always placed himself on the sidewalk at the door to his shop. Arms folded or hands/fists on hips, he'd look at the priest in calm, cold defiance & contempt. Not making a show of it, if anyone ever noticed, no one mentioned it to him or others after.

The robed one went by, staff tapping the pavement in rhythmic accompaniment to the soft tinkel of the bells of his ornate, green robe. Masked countenance looking neither to the right nor the left as he walked.

The figure receding in the distance, the baker mused:

"You ... thought ... YOU THOUGHT ... if I didn't conform to your beliefs ... didn't ... leave ... I would still go along with the rest of it? Live a miserable non-existence somewhere out of the way? Dwell ... in a hermitlike undeath, out of the minds of others?

"You thought old man ... you thought wrong.

"Every moment held under your sway, I hated. Your warnings of me paying for some sin or sins I have no recollection of went unheeded. I was actually proud of my black feathers ...

"All the same, you have no idea the happiness I felt when those wings finally dropped off. When the halos' hold was weak enough, I ripped it from my head!

"Just WHAT did you think? That I ... would continue to stay under your thumb? Sequester myself away from the sight & mind of all ... or become one of those mute freaks who serve you? No! I did NONE of that!

"How it must gall you old man. How it must tear your guts knowing ... knowing ... not only did I not shut myself away in undeserved sorrow & guilt ... but lived ... And still living! I have a wife & family. A business even! I've made a life of my own & the things that go with it. Things you wouldn't allow any of those poor children at Old Home or the Factory to have.

"And don't even think for one moment it's a quest for pennance or your non-existent forgiveness that I employ one of those unfortunate souls at my place of business. Nor is it out of my having been one of them so long ago. She's a damn good worker & a cheerful one at that!

"Cheerful ... you wouldn't allow me that either ...

"I've even set aside wages for her though she doesn't know it. Your not allowing one to better oneself ... Altruistic nonsense! No ... there's the off-chance she'll not take her day of flight & she could use a leg-up.

"And I've two good, sturdy sons for her to choose from. Both have taken a liking to her. They know my past & bide their time as well.

"Chance nothing ... I'll talk to her when the time is right. Even with my black feathers, I knew just how she felt when my Day of Flight neared ... Still do ...

"Yes old man ... You thought wrong ..."

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file.